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"THE SPIRIT OF THE AGE."

AN ADDRESS

DELIVERED BEFORE

THE TWO LITERARY SOCIETIES

OF THE

UNIVERSITY OF NORTH-CAROLINA,

BY

Hon. HENRY L. PINCKNEY.

Published by the request of the Philanthropic Society.

RALEIGH:
PRINTED BY J. GALES & SON.

1836.

☞ The great pressure of official business having rendered it impossible for the distinguished Author of this ADDRESS to leave his post in Congress, and comply with the agreement into which he had entered with the Philanthropic Society, a copy of it was forwarded by him, and read before the two Societies, by the President of the University, Hon. DAVID L. SWAIN.

The accidental obliteration of the manuscript has occasioned considerable delay in the publication of the Address.

CORRESPONDENCE.

UNIVERSITY OF NORTH-CAROLINA, August 11, 1836.

SIR: We are under the disagreeable necessity of informing you that the manuscript of the able Address you had the kindness to transmit to us, has been accidentally destroyed in the Office to which it was sent for publication. We have been instructed by the Philanthropic Society to apprize you of this fact, and request another copy, if, fortunately, the original is in your possession. You will add another to the great obligations under which we already lie, by granting this our request.

We are, Sir, with much respect and esteem, your's truly,

AUGUSTUS BENNERS,
JOSEPH B. CHERRY,
WILLIAM S. PETTIGREW,
} Committee.

Hon. HENRY L. PINCKNEY.

CHARLESTON, August 26, 1836.

GENTLEMEN: I have the honor to acknowledge the receipt of your favor, requesting another copy of my Address for publication, and assigning the reasons why it became necessary to apply for another copy. It is hardly necessary to say hat the reasons assigned are not only perfectly satisfactory, but that I feel deeply indebted for the kind manner in which you have conveyed them. In compliance with your request, I transmit you another copy by the same mail which will carry this. Allow me again, Gentlemen, to express my deep regret that I was unable to attend you personally, and make the pleasure, which would have been very great, of your personal acquaintance, and to beg you to present to the Philanthropic Society, of which I am proud to be a member, and to accept for yourselves, the assurance of the respect and esteem with which I am,

Your's truly,
HENRY L. PINCKNEY.

Messrs. AUGUSTUS BENNERS,
JOSEPH B. CHERRY,
WILLIAM S. PETTIGREW,
} Committee.

ADDRESS.

GENTLEMEN—In compliance with your invitation, I appear before you. Prudence, indeed, would have deterred me from the acceptance of a station, hitherto illustrated by the genius and the eloquence of your GASTONS and your IREDELLS; but patriotism forbade me to decline a service, by the execution of which, I might contribute, however partially or feebly, to the promotion of liberal intercourse between the States to which we are respectively attached. They ought to be united by the strongest ties of amity. They were both Colonies of the British Crown. They were members of the old Confederation. They were two of the *old Thirteen*, who resisted the tyranny, and threw off the dominion of the Parent Country. They deliberated together in the Continental Congress; fought together in the Revolutionary battle-grounds; partook the same dangers; achieved the same triumphs; and now enjoy, in their common freedom, the inestimable reward of their common sufferings and toils. If South Carolina can boast of the victory of Fort Moultrie, and still wears, fresh and unfaded, the laurels of King's Mountain, and other fields of deathless fame, to North Carolina alone belongs the high and signal honor of having originated the Declaration of American Independence. If the one can point to a long line of illustrious sons, of whom she can say, with Cornelia, *these are my jewels*, and who, like jewels, always shone most brightly in her darkest hour; the history of the other is emblazoned by many an exhibition of intellect, eloquence and virtue, worthy of the palmiest days

of Greece and Rome. If the former entered earlier than the latter into that great constitutional compact, by which the States of the Confederacy are beautifully blended into one, and under whose auspicious influence they have grown with almost magical rapidity, into a mighty empire, the comparative tardiness of the other has been more than compensated by her uniform devotion to the objects it was intended to accomplish, and by the ample and gratifying evidence it furnishes, that she will never wantonly profane the temple of American Liberty, nor sacrilegiously tear down the pillars of the sacred edifice of Union. They are, indeed, Sisters, in every sense of that endearing relation—members of the same political family, living under the same federative system, possessing similar forms of State Government, speaking the same language, having the same manners, customs and religion, enjoying the same immunities and privileges, engaged in the same pursuits, interested in the same objects, and looking forward, through the vista of futurity, to the same glorious and happy destiny. Who, then, would not make an effort to cement the ties that subsist between them? Or where is the citizen of either of them, who does not fervently desire, that, as they are identified in interests and institutions, they may be drawn more and more closely to each other, by reciprocations of liberal and kindly sentiments, until they become literally identified in principle and feeling?

And now, let me ask, what is the occasion that convenes us? Why this numerous assemblage, and the evident interest they exhibit in the scene before them? Is it connected with party principles, or with objects of a sectional or local character? Have we met to examine the internal condition, and foreign relations of our country? Or, to investigate the subjects involved in the approaching election of a Federal Chief Magistrate? Or, to lament the desolation of unhappy Florida, and weave a chaplet for the gallant men who flew to her rescue at the first intimation of her peril? Or, to enquire into the policy of national interference, on our part, in the sanguinary contest now carried on between Mexico and Texas, with a view to the acquisition of the latter by our Government, and the pros-

pective admission into this Confederacy of several additional slave-holding States, into which so extensive a territory might naturally be divided? No! we meet not to kindle the torch of Alecto, or to minister in any way to popular prejudice or passion. We meet not to array parties against each other in the field of strife; nor to exhibit the tomahawk or scalping-knife, reeking with the gore of our murdered countrymen; nor even to allude to the measures recently adopted for the protection of our frontier against a savage foe, who knows no sweeter music than a dying groan, nor source of pleasure than a gasping babe. Topics of this kind are but little in unison with the feelings and offices that belong to the Anniversary which this respected auditory have assembled to commemorate. They have left the world, with all its cares, the political arena, with all its tumultuous contention, the varied sources of agitation that are hourly springing up, not only in painful occurrences at home, but in the exciting scenes that are enacting in our neighbourhood—they have left all these, to commingle for a while in this peaceful abode of science, where, shaking off all other and distracting thoughts, they manifest their devotion, and give their powerful aid to the great cause of Literature, by offering the homage of freemen at its sacred shrine!

This, then, is the cause for which we are convened. This is the Commencement of your Alma Mater—when literary honors are awarded, and when each youthful victor, crowned with laurels, carries to his home, and to the world, the animating evidence of his merit, and the just reward of his assiduity and rectitude. To you, then, who are closing your Collegiate career, it is a most interesting and important period. Hitherto, you have been engaged in the same studies, enjoying the same pleasures, and knowing no contention but generous emulation in the pursuit of knowledge. Hitherto, you have lived like a band of brothers, now wooing wisdom in the philosophic grove, now roaming on the flowery heights of Helicon, now mingling in the contests of the Athenian Assembly, or Roman Forum, and feeling the spirit of Liberty burn within your bosoms, as you caught the inspiration from the very altars of Antiquity.

Hitherto, you have dwelt together, now sitting at the feet of Plato, as he sublimely unfolded the divine of virtue, or hanging with rapture on the lyre of Pindar, as it poured forth the tide of Olympic song; and while you thus called up "antiquity from the old Schools of Greece," and communed with the spirits of the mighty dead, similarity of pursuits naturally engendered con-fraternity of feeling, and your hearts glowed, and still glow, for each other, with all the ingenuous warmth of youthful friendship. But the period of separation has at length arrived, and these calm and delightful scenes must soon be exchanged for a far more extensive and important theatre. The dreams of youth are now to be succeeded by the realities of manhood. On this day, you will be invested with the *toga virilis*, like the Roman youth, and assume your places amongst men, and prepare for action on the stage of life. On this day, the implements of warfare will be put into your hands, and, armed with a shield and a spear, like the German youth, you will go forth from these calm retreats, to the active duties and arduous conflicts that await you. Farewell, then, to the green arbour, and the sunny fount. Farewell to Pindus, with its laurel shade, and the enchanting Hermus, with its golden stream. You leave the Schools, to enter on the world. You leave your revered Preceptors, to battle for yourselves. You leave each other, perhaps forever, to become, each for himself, the architect of the fame and fortune, whatever they may be, that may stamp the complexion of your future lives!

No wonder, then, that on such an occasion, such an assemblage should have attended the ceremonies connected with it. Who, indeed, can be indifferent to the future career of so many interesting and talented youth, quitting forever these green solitudes and classic vales, to enter on the vast and untried ocean of actual life? Here you are, flushed with academical distinction, buoyant with hope, confident of success, eager to enter the lists with men, and grasping, in anticipation, the laurel wreath of victory. But who can foretell your destiny? Who can explore that mysterious future, which may be to you a delightful stream, with fruits and flowers on its banks, or a dreary desart, with its

burning sands and blasting breath? Who can tell how many of you may become ornaments and benefactors of society, and descend to the tomb "full of years and full of honor"—and how many, diverted like Atalanta, from the race before them, may become the victims of alluring vice, and be hurried prematurely to dishonored graves? From these peaceful and secluded walks, you see nothing but the "calm surface of a summer's sea," inviting you to spread your sails, and take the auspicious flood that leads on to fortune. You see nothing but bright suns and unclouded skies, verdant hills and luxuriant fields, friends to assist, and admirers to applaud, fortune throwing her treasures in your laps, and fame, with her richest garlands in her hands, ready to crown your victorious brows!—Little dream you of the dangerous rocks which that smiling sea conceals beneath its bosom, or of the sudden and desolating tempests that may overwhelm you in a moment. Little know you of the fearful rapidity with which the clearest sky may be overcast with clouds, or of the keen and cutting frosts by which the fairest flower may be withered. Far be it from me, however, to repress the ardour of aspiring youth. Far be it from me to inspire you with suspicion, or chill you with fear. I say nothing, therefore, of the fickleness of friendship, or the uncertainty of fortune; nothing of the smiles of hyprocrisy or the low intrigues of political duplicity; nothing of the toils and sacrifices by which popular favor is acquired, or the pitiful trifles, and not less frequently the meritorious actions, by which it may be lost. But I feel that I would not properly discharge the office so kindly conferred upon me, if I did not warn you, that in blooming bowers, adders and scorpions often lie concealed; that the sweetest melody may be a Syren's song to lure you to your ruin; that the most luscious fruits are often those that turn to ashes in the taste; and, in one word, that the voyage of life may well be likened to Scylla and Charybdis, which he alone can navigate successfully, who has the requisite skill to avoid rocks upon the one side, and whirlpools on the other.

As you will soon be called upon, then, to act for yourselves, it is all important that you should be properly qualified to dis-

charge the duties, and surmount the difficulties, that await you, in society. It is by no means my intention, however, to lecture you upon the advantages of industry, or the utility of virtue. That office has been spared me by the wise and good men, to whom were confided the cultivation of your intellect, and the moral regulation of your hearts. There is no field of science they have not taught you to explore, nor principle of rectitude they have not implanted in your bosoms. I know, moreover, that in addressing you, I speak to *gentlemen;* to generous, ingenuous, well-educated youth, whose delicate sensibilities would recoil at the conception of an act of turpitude, and feel even the suspicion of dishonor as they would the oppression of a mountain's weight. Seeing, then, that your hearts are guarded, as I trust they are, by the instinctive principles of honor, refined and matured by virtuous education, it is useless to trouble you with a dull dissertation on integrity. And even were it otherwise, it would still be useless. The honor or honesty that is assumed through policy, is but "the homage of hypocrisy to virtue." He who practices the semblance of these noble qualities, not possessing them in truth, *may* go through life escaping censure, but can neither enjoy the feelings, nor deserve the reputation, of an upright man!

But the mere possession of high and estimable principles signifies but little, unless they are employed for the advantage of society. In vain, have you been taught to discipline your minds, if you relax, henceforward, in the pursuit of knowledge. In vain, has a foundation been laid for your future eminence and usefulness, if no generous ambition prompt you to erect the superstructure. It is not sufficient to possess good principles, or merely to refrain from the perpetration of ignoble deeds.—No dormant quality can constitute an element of human greatness. Man is an active animal. He is not only an individual, but a member of society. He was not formed to dream away his life, however pure or innocent it may be, but to devote the energies of his mind, and the virtues of his heart, to the discovery and advancement of the public good. The whole institution of civil society is but a system of reciprocal dependencies.

Individuals depend upon society for protection and security; and society depends on its component parts for its own stability and welfare. Every man, therefore, has duties to perform; and precisely to the extent to which he does perform them, is he virtuous and commendable as a man, or useful and patriotic as a citizen.

The importance of these duties, moreover, and the consequent obligation to discharge them, is intimately connected with the spirit of the age, and the general condition of the country, in which it has been your fortune to be born. Amongst a rude and uncultivated people, duties are few and simple in their character. With barbarians, the greatest savage is the greatest man. With the superstitious, the most secluded anchorite is the holiest Saint. And so, during the dark ages—that singular period of artificial manners and unreal life—of tilts and tournaments—of splendid pageantry and sanguinary war—when every principle of society was perverted, romantic passion being substituted for utility, and wild enthusiasm for solid virtue—during all that period, chivalry embraced all duties in itself, a lady's smile was the principle of honor, the song of a Troubadour was immortal fame, and the human mind being profoundly locked up in ignorance, the merest gleam of learning was esteemed a prodigy. But not so now. You live neither in a barbarous age, nor yet in that crepuscular condition of society, which stands in the same position between savageism and refinement, that twilight does between the deep darkness of the night, and the full splendor of the mid-day sun. On the contrary, you live in an age preeminently characterized by light and life: and as it is important that you should understand its spirit, that you may appreciate the obligations resting on yourselves, you will indulge me in a brief examination of some of the prominent features that distinguish it.

In the first place, then, *this is the age of Science.* Antiquity had but little science, in the strict signification of the term; but, in every department, moral, intellectual, and physical—in every thing relating to mind or matter—every thing that can illustrate the geography of the heavens or the earth—every

thing that can reveal the secrets of nature, or increase the strength of nations, or contribute to the security and elegance of life—the present century is illuminated with a flood of light. And, as it is the peculiar property of science to know no limit, so even its present elevation may justly be regarded as a point from which it will continue, with undazzled eye and unwearied wing, to ascend to greater and still greater heights. Each rolling year will still come laden with improvements, and every step in the march of mind, will either develope some new and valuable principle, or increase the power of those with which we are acquainted, by applying them to purposes to which as yet they have never been directed. And thus every known science will continue to advance, and new ones will be constantly added to their train, going on steadily to the *Ultima Thule* of human knowledge, and imparting, as they go, all that is essential, in every department of society, to the dignity and happiness of the human race. And it is the age of *Elegant Literature and the Arts*. It is true, however, respecting *this* assumption, that Antiquity may rise up, and dispute the palm. She may take us to the villa of Cicero, or the tomb of Virgil. She may show us the ruins of the Coliseum or Partheon. She may exhibit the agony of Laocoon, struggling with the Serpents, and the noble self-sacrifice of Alcestis, as she dooms herself to death for the preservation of her husband. And she may ask, where are *your* Polydorus and Euripides! What have *you*, superior to the Venus of Apelles! Who has yet touched the lyre with the plaintive sweetness of Tibullus!—Where is the invention in modern architecture, that rivals the luxuriant elegance of the Corinthian, or the graceful beauty of the Ionic order! And above all, what have you, in eloquence, comparable to the energy of that soul of fire, "who shook the Arsenal, and fulmined over Greece, to Macedon and Artaxerxes' throne"! But it is not my purpose to respond to these inquiries. It would be sacrilege to disturb her repose, by plucking a leaf from the laurel that adorns her tomb. There is no classic heart who would not that it should bloom forever with unfading freshness. In every thing susceptible of improve-

ment, we have left her far behind, and it ought not to mortify us, that, in those things which she could, and therefore did carry to perfection, we have been unable to surpass her. Science admits of endless progression, and is therefore constantly progressing. But imagination may fly at once to the highest heaven of invention, and as this was effected by ancient poetry, no modern wing can ascend beyond it. This is the difference between science and literature, as contradistinguished from each other. The one is emphatically the production of intellect, requiring patient research and profound investigation.—The other is the offspring of those faculties of the mind, which are usually employed in the creations of fancy or delineations of nature, in pourtraying character or exhibiting the passions of the human heart. Hence the vast superiority of Euler and La Place over Ptolemy and Euclid, or, in other words, of modern over ancient science, while Homer still remains the prince of poets, and sculptors, and painters still take their lessons from the great models of antiquity. But even admitting the claims of the ancients, and to the fullest extent to which their warmest admirers consider them entitled to admission, it is still demonstrable that the present age not only far surpasses all that have preceded it in the number and variety of its authors and its artists, but will bear an advantageous comparison with any in the extent of their learning, the originality of their genius, and the sterling merit of their works. In proof of this assertion, abundant testimony might easily be adduced from England, France, and the classic soil of Italy. But as my limits will not permit me to dwell upon this topic, I proceed to remark, in the next place, that a prominent feature of the present age is *the general diffusion of popular intelligence.* Amongst the ancients, the benefits of education were confined to few.—The Spartans were barbarians, and even an Athenian populace was an ignorant mob. Since the invention of the art of printing, however, information has become easy and accessible, and in every Christian country, therefore, the people have received an extraordinary degree of moral and mental cultivation. Of late years, particularly, the attention of patriots and philan-

thropists has been powerfully directed to the great object of popular education. Knowledge is now carried to the humble dwelling of the poor, as well as to the splendid mansion of the rich. Like the sun, it diffuses its light indiscriminately upon all, and all, in consequence, have become enlightened. But a still more conspicuous feature of the present age, is *the unprecedented extent to which the dominion of man over physical nature has been carried.* This is truly the era of steamboats and railways, of canals and tunnels. The prophecy of *Darwin* has been more than realized. *Watt* and *Fulton* have subdued the elements. Unconquered steam not only rides, like a sea-god, on the bosom of the ocean, but moves with resistless power and rapidity over every obstacle on land. And who can prescribe a limit to its conquests? Who can designate the barrier that it shall not pass, or name the river or the wilderness, however desolate and solitary now, that it shall not cause to roll down gold, or blossom as the rose? And it is *the epoch of exploration and discovery.* Governments are laudably vieing with each other in the cause of science. New accessions are constantly making to the stores of knowledge. The spirit of adventure examines land and sea, the Niger and Columbia, the Pacific Ocean and the American wilderness, and while it daily discloses new wonders of nature, and new mines of knowledge, it also lays open new avenues of commerce, and new and extensive sources of national prosperity. But while nations are thus engaged in exploring and subduing physical nature and its elements, they have not forgotten to investigate and establish the principles of government and the rights of man. This is peculiarly *the age of civil and religious liberty.* The ancients had nothing that deserved the name. Grecian liberty was always wild and tumultuous, and the Romans knew no medium between licentiousness and servitude. These great principles originated in the era of the Reformation, when Luther and Zuingle, and their bold coadjutors, broke the chain of ecclesiastical oppression, and proclaimed freedom of conscience to a captive world. From that period they have gone on regularly, "conquering and to conquer." They shone triumphantly in England, in

the memorable Revolution of 1688, and they gave the impulse to our Revolutionary war, and laid the foundation of the American Constitution. And the triumph of Liberty here, awakened the enthusiasm of the gallant French. But, unfortunately, they knew but little of regulated freedom, and their revolution, therefore, instead of ending, like ours, in the success of the principles in which it had its origin, terminated in the establishment of a military despotism. Since then, however, the Catholics of Ireland have achieved their emancipation, and English Dissenters have been admitted to the full enjoyment of their birthright. Man no longer dares to legislate for Heaven, or to regulate conscience by penal laws. In many other points, too, important advances have been made in enlarging the freedom of the British Constitution. A very numerous portion of the people, formerly denied all participation in the affairs of government, are now entitled to the exercise of the elective franchise, and the period is rapidly approaching when the odious principle, that one denomination of religionists shall be compelled to sustain another, will be finally abolished. In France, all connection between Church and State has been dissolved, and in consonance with the spirit of the glorious Revolution of '31, a Republican system has been engrafted on its monarchy. There is, indeed, every where, a constant contest between freedom and oppression. Even in old Spain, the spirit of liberty heaves and throes, though Pelion has been piled upon Ossa to crush it to the earth; and at this very moment, it nerves the arms, and animates the hearts of a gallant band in a neighbouring territory, who, with the true nobleness of the Anglo-Saxon blood, have firmly resolved to achieve their independence, or to perish in the effort. And may we not hope that they will succeed! While we weep over the scene of the Alamo, may we not rejoice at the brilliant victory of San Jacinto, and the consequent capture of a tyrant whose deeds of blood have disgraced humanity! And may we not trust that the period is near at hand, when the people of Texas shall indeed be our brethren, and when the chorus of freedom shall reverberate from the Hudson to the Sabine, and from the banks of the Colorado

to the heights of Bunker! But, again, *this is the age of liberal principles and free enquiry.* The human mind is no longer chained down by despotism, nor locked up in darkness. Antiquity is no longer the shield of error, nor dogmatic authority the evidence of argument. Nothing now can stand, that is not sustained by truth and reason. Every system is subjected to the severest scrutiny, and the consequence is, that while every valuable principle is strengthened, and every good system refined and purified, by the ordeal of discussion, all pernicious and untenable doctrines are tottering and falling, and new and better ones erected on their ruins. And, "though last, not least," it is *the age of active piety and enlarged benevolence.*— After whole centuries of apathy, the Christian Church has at length awakened to the full performance of its duty. It has undertaken the great enterprise of the conversion of the world, and organized a system of moral machinery admirably adapted to the purpose. And its success has been commensurate with the godlike principle upon which it acts. It has established thousands of nurseries, in which myriads of children receive the benefits of religious education. It has revolutionized society by the great engine of the Temperance Reform. It has placed heralds of salvation on Moslem minarets and on Pagan walls. It has kindled the light of Revelation in Alpine solitudes, and on Himalayan heights. It has planted the standard of the Cross on the banks of the Ganges, and in the Isles of Polynesia. In one word, it has brought on the dawn of the millennial day; and it will go on prosperously, like an army with banners, invading kingdoms and subduing nations, 'till the pure spirit of Christianity shall spread, like a sea of glory, over a reformed and evangelized world!

Such is the age in which you live! And here permit me to remark, that even in such an age, and amongst the most distinguished nations, our own country occupies a high and enviable rank. Young as it is, its population has increased already from three to fifteen millions, and its flag is emblazoned with nearly double the number of its original stars. Already can it boast of Appian and Flaminian ways, of columns as towering

as that of Trajan, of canals surpassing those of Languedoc and Ellismere, and of an extent of rail-ways not only exceeding any that is known to exist in any portion of the globe, but to which will soon be added what will well deserve to be considered one of the wonders of the world, in the completion of that magnificent enterprize which is to unite the Atlantic with the Valley of the Mississippi, and which will constitute equally a mine of wealth, a bond of brotherhood, and a golden chain of union. But it is not only in the developement of its physical resources, that this young Republic moves on rapidly to greatness and distinction. As knowledge is the handmaid of freedom, so is freedom the patron of useful knowledge. Our people well know that without public virtue and intelligence, there is no security for the permanency of our Republican Institutions, and therefore no effort has been omitted to advance the great cause of popular enlightenment. In consequence of this, we not only have a large number of scientific and ingenious men, to whom we are constantly indebted for important improvements and discoveries, but it is not extravagant to assert that the great body of American people are beyond all comparison more intelligent and better educated, than any other upon earth. Indeed, under the beneficent influence of our admirable government, which prohibits the slightest infringement of the freedom of speech or of the press, the American mind may literally be said to revel in the enjoyment of its privileges and its powers. Nothing can elude its search, or escape its grasp. It cleaves the skies, and penetrates the earth. It chains the winds and the waves, and subjects the elements to its stern dominion. Our country, moreover, is admirably rich in all the materials of a national literature. It is true, it may be deficient in those things that form the peculiar charm of the ancient classics, and are supposed to constitute the elements of classical interest and beauty. We have no fabulous origin; no romantic history; nothing preternatural in the wisdom of our sages, or the valour of our heroes. We have no Jupiter, shaking Olympus with his awful nod; no Neptune, ruling the ocean with his trident. We have no Naiads or Dryads; no Delphic Oracle, or

Ægerian Grove. We have no Pactolus, rolling down gold; no mouldering ruins, or prophetic streams; nor any of those venerable, consecrated scenes, on which the genius of poetry delights to dwell, and from which it is supposed to derive its choicest inspiration. And so again, we have no Feudal Institutions; no age of chivalry, with its high-wrought principles and fantastic laws; no crusades to recover Jerusalem from the power of the Infidels; nor have we gnomes, or sylphs, or other creations of the fairy tribe. But why should an American need Apollo or the Muses, when he has the spirit of liberty to inspire his song, and his own glorious country to afford a theme? Why should he sigh for the Arno or the Avon, for Parnassus or Hymettus, when he has, in every thing around him—in the character of our government, in our towering mountains and majestic streams, in the enterprising spirit of our people, in the eloquence of our orators, and the wisdom of our statesmen, in cities springing up, and forests disappearing, as if more by magic than the art of man, and particularly in the literary, benevolent and religious institutions that adorn our country, as thickly and beautifully as the stars of the firmament—when he has in these things, all the elements of natural and moral sublimity and beauty, every thing that can elevate the imagination, or refine the taste? Assuredly, American history and scenery, American character and actions, comprise an ample and appropriate field for the exercise of American talent.—Nature has not only formed our country on the grandest scale, but it is inhabited by a people who exhibit, in all their modes of thought and principles of action, a beautiful moral resemblance to the dignity and boldness of the natural scenery around them. Here, then, are subjects of reflection, and sources of inspiration, new, copious and inviting, and such as no other country can afford. Here are gardens in which genius may revel, principles on which philosophy may speculate, events and characters on which the muse of history may delight to linger. And we find, accordingly, that American genius has essayed this new field of fame, and is daily producing from it an abundant supply of the purest ore. It is no longer ques-

tionable whether we shall have a literature of our own, nor what will be its rank in the republic of letters. Even now, in every department of learning and the arts, our country commands the respect and admiration of the world. Our rivers roll in song, our hills are vocal with the music of the lyre, and even the prairie has assumed an interest scarcely inferior to any that has ever been imparted to the ocean. Painting vies with history, and sculpture with poetry, in embalming the memory of illustrious deeds, and presenting the image of illustrious men. And if such is our country now, so young, and yet so eminent, who cannot foretell the splendor of its future destiny! Who cannot see, that "as the Sun, when he springs from the chambers of the East, goes on his course, rejoicing in his strength," so this great Republic is proceeding, with gigantic strides, in its high career of honor and distinction! Yes, as surely as the Alleghany lifts its head on high, or the beautiful Ohio glitters in the sunbeams, with a world of wealth upon its bosom, so surely is the period rapidly approaching, when our present population will be augmented fourfold, and when the star spangled banner will wave in triumph, from the Atlantic to the Pacific, over an imperial Republic, great in arts and renowned in arms, and rivalling, if not transcending, the splendour of the Augustan ages of France and England!

Such is the period in which your lots have been cast, and such the theatre in which you will soon be called upon to bear your parts.

Let me, then, earnestly impress upon you, as a duty to yourselves, *the continued cultivation of your minds*. Recollect that your education is not only not completed, but may in truth be said to be just begun. An excellent foundation has indeed been laid, upon which, with adequate exertion, you may erect the edifice of your future fame: but as no foundation, however excellent in itself, can be of any actual utility, unless the superstructure be added of which it is intended as the basis, so all the instruction you have here received, important as it may be, when considered as the substratum of a more elevated scheme to be carried on hereafter, will not only be of no prac-

tical advantage to yourselves or to society, but will literally be lost and forgotten, and in a shorter period, too, than was necessary to obtain it, unless it be made the ground-work of future and more extensive acquisitions, or, in other words, unless you determine to be more systematic and sedulous than ever in the pursuit of knowledge. Neglect nothing, then, that you have been taught in College. Learning was not imparted here, to be thrown away hereafter. He who is content with obscurity, may disdain to labor; but as fame can only be purchased by incessant toil, so he who would be eminent must always be industrious. There is no limit to knowledge, and there can be none, of course, to intellectual improvement, and consequently none to the necessity of study. Follow up, then, every branch of science, and every department of elegant literature. The more you acquire, the higher you will rise; and while every accession of knowledge will increase your fame, the love of fame, by a natural re-action, will stimulate your thirst for knowledge, and thus, at every step you take, you will be constantly enlarging the sphere of your influence, and the sources of your happiness. And here, in connection with intellect, permit me to suggest *the necessity of Eloquence.* History abounds with illustrations of the resistless power of this admirable art. Amongst the Republics of antiquity, he who was most successful in appealing to the passions, or enkindling the sensibilities of the multitude, may literally be said to have directed the movements and controlled the destiny of his country, during the period of his oratorical ascendancy. It was the voice of Demosthenes, and that alone, that united all Greece against the ambitious views of Philip; and in Rome, even at a period of great popular corruption, the eloquence of Cicero defeated the conspiracy of Cataline, and compelled the profligate and rapacious Verres to resort to exile for the preservation of his life. England has no prouder name than that of Pitt, and, to say nothing of the Massillons and Mirabeaus of France, even unhappy Ireland, amid all her sufferings, smiled through her tears, and shone through her grief, with the resplendent triumphs of her Floods and Grattans. In no coun-

try, however, is eloquence more powerful, or of more importance, than in our own happy land. But, as knowledge is power, so the essence of eloquence is sense. To be an accomplished orator, much more is requisite than an artificial modulation of the voice, or an affected display of personal grace, or a tumultuous outpouring of impassioned vehemence. Unfortunately, caricatures of this kind are sometimes mistaken for genuine eloquence, and speeches are applauded, as splendid specimens of sterling oratory, whose sole merit consists in idle declamation, or a skilful application of vulgar arts to the passions and prejudices of the populace. But, the ranting of a demagogue, however it may succeed for the moment, confers no solid and enduring fame. Any demagogue may acquire evanescent notoriety, but true fame can only be attained by sterling merit, and sterling eloquence requires the combination of a high order of intellect and eloquence, with the most pure and elevated virtue. Eloquence is powerless, unless supplied by intellect; nor can virtue exert its proper influence, unless enlightened by knowledge and enforced by eloquence. And as eloquence is nothing without intellect, and dangerous without virtue, so intellect without eloquence, loses half its power, and, destitute of virtue, can scarcely fail to be a curse, both to its possessor and society. The combination of these qualities forms the character of the accomplished Orator, and may be said to constitute the perfection of humanity. Strive, then, to attain this perfection. Image to yourselves a standard of excellence, embodying all that is noble in intellect, and persuasive in oratory, and pure in virtue, and follow it, as your polar star, with a fixed determination to realize all that is possible of the splendid combination, in your own characters respectively. Continue to penetrate the arcana of the human mind, to range amongst the stars, and to explore the recesses of the Ocean and the Earth. Make yourselves thoroughly acquainted with the most approved systems of moral and political science, and particularly with the principles of political economy. But whilst, by this process, you enlarge your minds with valuable knowledge, *you should by no means abandon your devotion*

to the Classics. The mind, like the body, not only requires strength for usefulness, but decoration for effect. The massive pillars of a temple, however efficient without adornment, become objects of admiration to the tasteful eye, when they display the richness of Corinthian capitals, or are beautifully fluted with Ionic art. Continue, then, to drink deeper and deeper of the Pierian Spring. The study of the Classics not only disciplines the mind, but it supplies the orator with imagery, and the reasoner with illustration. He may be a good lawyer, who knows nothing but law, or a good physician, who knows nothing but medicine; but no man can be accomplished, in any liberal profession, who cannot command extensive resources in literature. Repudiate the new-fangled doctrine, that the Ancient Languages are dead, and should therefore be discarded. They are not only not dead, but will live until ancient literature shall be buried in oblivion: and, however conversant a scholar may be with modern literature, yet he, who neglects the ancients, does great injustice to himself, because it is unquestionable that almost all that is sublime in conception, or beautiful in description, or exquisite in pathos, amongst the moderns, may be traced, and not unfrequently, with the most palpable distinctness, to the hallowed fountains of antiquity. But, not to stray further in this seductive field, allow me to recommend *the advantages of History.* Were it only a barren chronicle of the births and deaths of monarchs, who were born, no one knows when, and died, no one cares how; or did it only record the revolting details of all the cruelties, and massacres, and wars, by which humanity has been disgraced and afflicted, in every country, and in every age; no one will dispute, that the time would be idly occupied, that might be devoted to its study. But it has far higher ends and purposes than these. If it tells of trifles not worth knowing, it also narrates events, and describes characters and actions, which will live forever in the memory of man, and which even now exercise an influence over the destinies of nations. Here you may trace the origin, progress, and decline of empires, and comprehend the secret, and often insignificant sources, of the

mightiest results. Here you may see how often the fortunes of individuals have been identified with the fate of nations, how often ambition has assumed the garb of patriotism, and an affected devotion to the people covered the deepest and darkest designs against their rights and liberties. Here you may see how a free people are always corrupted before they are enslaved, and how surely popular corruption lays the corner stone of tyranny. Here you may see that the forms of freedom are often retained after the spirit has departed, and that the "unreal mockery" of popular institutions may still be exhibited, like "a whited sepulchre full of dead mens' bones," after the people themselves have been deprived of all actual participation in the administration of affairs. And here you may learn *the prodigious influence of moral causes upon the destiny of nations*. History is full of instruction upon this important subject. The same physical causes still exist in Rome, that did exist in the period of her greatest glory and prosperity.—The sky of Italy is as beautiful as it was when the people seceded to the Sacred Mount; Tiber still rolls his stream as in the days of the Scipios, and the Seven Hills retain their places as firmly and immovably as when the dignity and virtue of the Roman Senate appeared as firm and imperishable as themselves: but a modern Italian can neither conceive the elevated principles and heroic spirit that formed the characters, and fired the bosoms, of the ancient Romans, nor even realize his own descent from such a noble ancestry. The same physical causes still exist in Greece, that were in existence there, when the Persians were repulsed at the Straits of Thermopylæ, or when Miltiades achieved the memorable victory of Marathon; but Grecian glory has long been buried in the grave, and the brutal Turk, as he treads in disdain upon the tomb of Phocion, knows no classic sympathy for the departed grandeur of the great mother country of Republics—the honored parent of freedom, and science, and the arts. It is evident, then, that physical causes cannot perpetuate national power or prosperity. They may supply the means of preserving liberty, where the spirit of liberty burns; but they cannot supply its place, where

the spirit is extinct. No: as surely as effects result from causes, popular degeneracy is the invariable precursor of political enslavement. As the ancient Republics fell, in the height of their magnificence, and from the very rottenness of luxury, such must inevitably be the fate of ours, whenever the canker of corruption shall have infected the vitals of the body politic. Vain, *then*, will be all the physical advantages that nature has conferred, or that ingenuity can devise. In vain may we boast of our extended empire, or of our great and growing population, or of the variety of our soil and products, or of our unbounded commerce and flourishing manufactures, or of any other element that enters into the composition of national wealth and strength! It will all be in vain. No vastness of territory or of numbers, no agriculture or manufactures, no arts of elegance and luxury, no rail-roads or canals, no marble statutes or monumental columns, can preserve our Republican Institutions in purity and vigour, whenever the people shall be ignorant or careless of the rights they were intended to secure, or shall become so thoroughly debased as to care less about their loss, than the trouble or danger of preserving them. And, on the other hand, history will also show you that civilization always conquers savagism, that mind always conquers matter, and that a free and enlightened people, knowing their rights and daring to maintain them, will always succeed in any contest with any enemy, however superior in mere physical capacity. And all this will impress *the necessity of promoting popular education*, without which there can be no public spirit or love of country; or, in other words, it will teach you to devote all your energies to the improvement and extension of those moral elements which constitute the very life-blood of freedom, and upon which all our hopes depend of the preservation and transmission, in their original strength and pristine beauty, of those sacred and inestimable principles upon which our Government was founded. It will show you how detestable tyranny is, and teach you, like Hannibal, to vow eternal enmity against it. It will show you how hardly freedom is acquired, and how easily lost, and teach you to cher-

ish it with vestal fervor and fidelity. It will show you how little dependance can be placed on the public virtue of a private profligate, and that public agents should be judged by their acts rather than professions. It will show you how many nations have struggled for freedom, and been unable to obtain it; how many have acquired, and been unable to retain it. And it will introduce you to the wise and good. It will make you acquainted with every system, and with every sect. It will imbue you with the rich spirit of philosophy and rhetoric. It will show you virtue in its loveliest forms, and vice in its most hideous deformity. It will show you patriotism in all its purity, and treason in all its blackness. And there, too, you may learn the instability of fortune, the versatility of popular opinion, and the essential nothingness of all the world calls great. There you may see Aristides banished, because he was called "the Just," and a monument erected to Socrates by those who condemned him to drink the hemlock. There you may see Belisarius, now commanding a victorious army, and now dependant upon common charity, and Marius, the conqueror of the Cimbri, and often invested with the dignity of Consul, sitting, an exile, on the ruins of Carthage. There you may see Napoleon, now disposing of Crowns and Kingdoms at his pleasure, now dying, a wretched captive, on an ocean rock.—And there too, you may behold our own Washington, after having conducted his country safely through the War of Independence, resigning his sword to Congress, and retiring, like Cincinnatus, to the rural shades from which he had been drawn to fight her battles.

Of all history, then, *let that of your own Country be most deeply imprinted on your minds.* It will explain the principles for which your fathers fought, and teach you to bind them in your inmost hearts. It will show you the priceless value of the high privileges you inherit, and cause you to resolve, like patriots, to preserve them for yourselves, and to transmit them, undiminished, to posterity. It will show you the fatal effects of Civil and Religious intolerance; the despotism that has been exercised over the minds and consciences of men; the atrocities

that have been perpetrated in the name of Religion, and for the sake of Heaven; and while it will inspire you with an abhorrence of the cruelties that drove our ancestors from all the comforts and elegancies of refinement to a howling wilderness, it will also inspire you with an ardent attachment to those great principles of civil and religious liberty, for which they endured so many dangers and privations, and which they have left us as their richest legacy, consecrated by their sufferings, and sealed with their blood. It will show you, moreover, that in all free countries, and in ours not less than others, there is always danger that patriotism may be merged in faction, and that the people, forgetting their country in subserviency to party, and still worse, to men, may become the servile tools of demagogues, and fit instruments of tyranny. And thus it will show you, again, how exceedingly important it is, that party spirit should be eradicated from amongst us, and that the citizens of this great Republic, acting on principle for the public good, should disdain to forego their country, either for the accomplishment of factious objects, or the advancement of ambitious men!

Such, then, is a faint exhibition of the course of conduct that is indispensable to eminence, or, in other words, of what I conceive to be included in your duties to yourselves. By pursuing this course, you will become well qualified to discharge your duties to your Country!

On this point, I shall say but little, though it opens a field not less attractive than unbounded. He who faithfully performs his duty to himself, by the enrichment of his mind with knowledge, and his heart with virtue, can scarcely fail in his obligations to his country. It may safely be presumed that he would be a good citizen, in the ordinary acceptation of the term. But passive fidelity is at best but a negative quality.—Your country requires your services, as well as your affections. It is not sufficient that you revere the Constitution; you must support and defend it against all infractions, from whatever quarter they may come, whether from the Federal or State departments of the Government. It is not sufficient that you love the Union; you must enlist as soldiers, under its holy

banner, whenever any enemy shall attempt to undermine its foundations, or to batter down its walls. In a word, it is not sufficient to obey the laws, or approve the institutions, under which you live; they must be actively sustained and advocated, whenever their authority shall be assailed by violence, or their existence endangered by illegal combinations. And, that you may sustain them properly, make yourselves thoroughly conversant *with the true character, and legitimate functions, of our federative system.* Examine it well, in all its bearings and relations. Ascertain the purposes for which it was made, the extent of the powers conferred upon it, and of those reserved to the individual States. You will then comprehend it, in all its harmony and beauty. You will then see independent sovereignties, exercising, jointly, certain common powers for their common good, reciprocally securing the rights and liberties of all the parties to the compact, and exercising separately the whole residuary mass of undelegated power. There is no other government like this. The world has produced no parallel. It may have defects, but they are spots in the sun, almost invisible in its radiance, and not worth the trouble of detection.—Whatever, therefore, may be the defects of the system, or the errors or abuses of authority under it, let nothing strike at the existence of the government itself. Defects may be remedied, abuses corrected, all minor evils may be eradicated or endured; but destroy this Union, and who can rebuild it? Dismember these confederated States, and who can save them from irreparable ruin? Extinguish the light of this Republic, that now guides the efforts and animates the hopes of suffering humanity, in other portions of the globe, and "where's the Promethean heat that can this light relume"? Bear with me, gentlemen, in the expression of these sentiments. Be assured it is not superfluous or unnecessary. The language of disunion has become too common. Time was, when, like the first approach of vice, it excited horror: but, like vice, familiarity has not only diminished its offensiveness, but even rendered it, to a certain extent, an object of desire. In the youth of our country, however, is our country's hope. On you will depend, materially,

the perpetuity, or downfall, of this glorious fabric. Cherish, then, an ardent devotion to our happy forms of government, both State and Federal. Sustain *the States, to the full extent of their reserved authorities*, and restrain the Federal Legislature within its constitutional sphere. But cultivate, also, an expanded patriotism, and a generous attachment *to every portion of the Union*. Never suffer your country to be sacrificed to faction, nor your judgment to be blinded by local prejudices, but, rising above all sectional and contracted views, remember that you are American citizens, as well as citizens of States, and that he who is false to our common country, can never be faithful to his native State. And remember, moreover, that while we live under a system of political equality, we also profess to live *under a government of laws*. We boast of the capacity of man to govern himself. We profess to uphold the majesty of the laws, to revere the sanctity of justice, and to act on the principle that a man is presumed to be innocent, until he has been proved to be guilty. Events, however, have recently occurred, setting all these principles at defiance, trampling on the institutions of justice, and threatening to uproot the foundations of civil society itself. The spirit of mobocracy has crossed the Atlantic, and burst forth, in this land of law, in all its hideous deformity, and atrocious violence. Property is destroyed, cruelty inflicted, and even life itself is taken, not merely on suspicion, but often in cases where it is known that no guilt exists. Now, unless this lawless spirit is arrested, it will necessarily become more frequent in occurrence, and more violent in action. No man's life or property will be safe, who happens to be enrolled on the list of the proscribed. Anarchy will usurp the place of law, and our country will become the theatre of many a bloody and disgraceful scene, in which not only every act of violence will be an outrage on society, but in which, from the very nature of the case, the innocent will be punished indiscriminately with the guilty. And, akin to this spirit of illegal violence, is that revolting doctrine that would array the poor against the rich, as opposite and hostile classes, and that labors to introduce *a community of property*, under the

specious appellation of *an equality of rights*. History affords many warning examples of its baleful fruits. In the Grecian Commonwealths, contests frequently arose from the inequality of property, and whenever the poor prevailed, they expelled the rich, and took possession of their wealth. Similar contests occurred in Rome, and produced the passage of Agrarian laws. This same doctrine was interwoven with the French Revolution, and caused many of the horrors of that memorable drama. And now we have it in America. It is true that it has been hitherto confined to the more populous cities of the North, and that, from the peculiar organization of Southern society, and particularly from the institution of domestic slavery, it can scarcely be said to have gained a foothold in the region of the South. But, like the spirit of mobocracy, it is contagious in its character, and therefore cannot be too solemnly deprecated, or too earnestly resisted. If not checked at the North, it may spread to the South, and, wherever it appears, it is destined, sooner or later, to produce a convulsion of all the elements of civil society, to which nothing can be compared but the tremendous eruption of a burning mountain. He, therefore, who aspires to the title of a patriot, should be the uncompromising opponent of every doctrine and every practice, no matter how glossed by specious pretexts, or artfully urged for the public good, of which the tendency is to substitute lawless violence for the established forms of justice, or to produce a conflict between different portions of the people, which insidious agitators may produce, but which, when once begun, no human power or wisdom can control. And here, permit me to remind you, that as Consolidation and Disunion are the two extremes of our political system, and its equilibrium can only be maintained *by averting both*, so both can only be averted *by a strict observance of the Constitution*, and by causing the government to be administered with impartiality and kindness as regards the States. And let me warn you also, to beware of the excesses of party spirit. Doubtless it may be necessary to a certain extent, in a government like ours. The vigilance of a minority may be highly important in restraining abuses by a dominant majority;

and the collision of intellect and the excitement of conflict, may be equally important in kindling and spreading the fire of freedom, seeing that any thing, no matter what, the constant contention of party, or the utmost licentiousness of liberty, are far preferable to that miserable apathy which is political death, or to that general servility which is the bane of a Republic, and the stepping stone to monarchy. But there is a medium in this, as in every thing else; and, as party is but too apt to degenerate into faction, and principles to be forgotten in devotion *to men*, so a true patriot, looking honestly and steadily to his country's good, will neither bow servilely to the dictation of power on the one hand, nor suffer himself to be governed by a reckless spirit of indiscriminating opposition on the other.—And, while you act upon these high and expanded principles in politics, as I trust you will, let not *the great cause of general education* be forgotten. I shall offer no argument to prove the intimate connection between Intelligence and Freedom. None but an educated people can be virtuous, and nothing but public virtue can preserve our republican institutions in their purity. And, in connection with popular enlightenment, without which every thing else is vain, it will be not the least of your obligations, as citizens, to promote to the utmost of your ability and influence *all liberal and public-spirited enterprises*, which have for their object the advancement of our country in intellectual, moral, or physical strength, or are calculated to give us a name amongst the nations, and to knit us together in unity as a political family at home. Such are some of the duties which you owe your country. I come now to speak of those that you owe to God!

These may all be comprised in a single word. They are, to acquire personal piety for yourselves, and to honour and sustain the Christian Religion, and all the institutions and operations connected with it. Of all the enemies of the human race, he is the greatest, who, in a country like ours, would disseminate the poison of infidelity, and destroy at once the happiness of individuals, and the very foundation of our Government. Christianity is the rock on which they stand, and

without which there would be no hope for either. Extinguish that, and as the extinction of the natural sun would produce universal desolation, so the moral world would be wrapt in darkness. Abolish that, and the vail of our political temple would be rent, and the people would be driven into despotism, as the only refuge from their own excesses. Disdain the idea that Religion is an evidence of mental imbecility. That cannot be weakness, which proceeds from the fountain of infinite wisdom. That cannot be weakness, to which we are indebted for the purest system of morality, the most sacred principles of justice, and for all that is precious in the rights of man. Examine the history of your own country, and you will find, that, generally intelligent as our people are, there is at least an equal amount of learning in those devoted to Religion, as in any other class. Consult the annals of the Christian world, from the Christian Æra down, and you will find, that in every age and country, literature and science have been more extensively cultivated, and more essentially advanced, by ministers and professors of Christianity, than by any other portion of society whatever. He, then, who rejects the hope set before him in the Gospel, from the miserable fear that, by embracing it, he may be subjected to the imputation of mental weakness or superstitious folly, not only exhibits gross ignorance of Christianity itself, but of the host of *literati* that have been and are enlisted in its service. There is, indeed, no object more pure, or elevated, or ennobling, to which human intellect and eloquence can be applied, than in inculcating the obligations, and exhibiting the advantages of the Christian Religion. Suffer me, then, to entreat you to consider its importance to yourselves, your country, and the world. Realize the great truth, that without personal piety, you can have no solid happiness on earth, and no hope of felicity hereafter.—Realize the great truth, also, that the genius of Christianity is the source from which we derive all that we are, and all that we have, as a free, enlightened, and happy people, and that, without its pure and elevating influence, we should have been involved in all the darkness and degradation of superstition,

ignorance and vice. Realize these great truths, and you cannot fail to be impressed with the imperious corresponding obligations that rest upon you, to love and honor God, and to exert all your energies in sustaining and diffusing the institutions of the Gospel. Go, then, Gentlemen, into the untried world that lies before you. I have already shown that it is not a field in which you will have only to recline by gurgling streams, or muse in shady groves, or regale your senses with fruits and flowers, but that it is a theatre of action, in which the prize of honor can only be attained by a rare combination of intellect and eloquence, of industry and virtue. Put on the armour, then, that is best adapted for the conflict. How honorable will it be to yourselves, to attain distinction as the just reward of superior merit! How gratifying will it be to your revered Preceptors, and all your relatives, to witness your career, as orators and scholars, from one point of elevation to another, and to know that each ascending step is the evidence and the effect of a corresponding growth, on your part, in all the elements that enter into the composition of human greatness! Go then, Gentlemen, and carry with you the principles I have endeavored to delineate. Determine to excel in all noble arts and qualities. Cultivate an ardent love of liberty, and a deep and abiding attachment to the excellent Government under which we live. Above all, determine to be Christians—always remembering, that he only is a real patriot, who serves his country in the fear of God; that he only is truly rich, who enjoys the friendship of his Saviour; and that all earthly honors are worse than nothing, when compared with the honor that cometh from on high. And now, Farewell. Pursue the course recommended, and every rational aspiration will be fully gratified. You will go through life with usefulness and honor, popular admiration will crown you with undying fame, and a grateful country will venerate your memories!